Taiwanese Religions and Culture

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Poetry Review

Reading these poetries could remind us of the voice and vision of those sages. We also could have better understandings about the fundamental themes of diverse religions. Some people say that “Life is just like a river, and religion is like water in the river” because they believe their lives will be turn into desert without the religion beliefs. How about you? When religion comes to your lives, your river of life will be more plentiful or vice versa.

Confucius

The superior man, when resting in safety, does not forget that danger may come. When in a state of security he does not forget the possibility of ruin. When all is orderly, he does not forget that disorder may come. Thus his person is not endangered, and his States and all their clans are preserved.
Lao Tzu

The sage does not hoard. The more he helps others, the more he benefits himself. The more he gives to others, the more he gets himself. The Way of Heaven does one good but never does one harm. The Way of the sage is to act but not to compete.

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Buddha

Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.

(The Enlightened One)
Bodhisattva

Hell is not empty, oaths do not lead to Buddhahood;
when all sentient beings have crossed over, and then enlightenment is achieved

Muhammad

Four things support the world: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valor of the brave.

Christ

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(Psalms 23:1-6)
People Search

You have to answer Yes, No, or ? to the following questions and then find someone who agrees with you. Ask the person to sign the box.

*A person can sign a paper only once*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most young people are very committed to their religion.</th>
<th>Most people attend a religious service at least once a week</th>
<th>Belief in one religion is important to most young people today.</th>
<th>I have more than one religious beliefs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are lots of religious groups in Taiwan today.</td>
<td>People only turn to religion when they need something.</td>
<td>Most people spend time in prayer each day.</td>
<td>Most young people never attend religious services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old people are very religious.</td>
<td>Attitudes to religion have changed in my community.</td>
<td>Religious practice is only important to children and old people.</td>
<td>Religion is a great comfort to many people.</td>
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</table>
What is religion?

There are many definitions of "religion" in common usage, and the author has defined it very broadly in this book. Religion is a belief system, a moral value, and a philosophy of life, and it could be shared by a group of members. Religion, like culture itself, which consists of beliefs and social values that relate humanity to spirituality, are generated by human beings in their societies. The term "religion" sometimes interchanges with belief systems, and faith, but the major difference between religion and personal beliefs is that religion has a social aspect. Different religions put into practice in various countries, and each religion possesses its own unique beliefs. Some long-established beliefs have been passed from one generation to another, and these belief systems become the part...
of culture. That is to say, religion is the reflection of a culture, not vice versa. In other words, those who believe in the same religion accustom themselves to the similar life-styles, and their mode of life are practiced step by step based on doctrine such as moral principle.

In this book, the author makes a brief discussion about monotheistic religions, eastern religions, faith or spiritual groups, moral systems, and beliefs in the existence of God and Goddess. However, there are no related identical principles and significances in all religions or belief systems, and we also recognize that most people identify "religion" in their unique manners.

Types of Religious Systems

1. Monotheism: believe in one god (e.g., Christianity and Islam)

2. Polytheism: believe in many gods (e.g., Buddhism and Taoism)

3. Pantheism: God is present in all things and transcends all things (e.g., Hinduism)

4. Animism: believe in spirit beings that animate nature (e.g., Earth god);
they may or may not take the shape of the human (e.g., Hopi); humans share the world with a population of extraordinary and mostly invisible beings, ranging from souls and ghosts to saints and fairies, angels, demons, devils, and gods.

**Categories of Religion**

1. **International Religion:** Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, ... etc. Across national borders and spread out around the world.

2. **National Religion:** Christianity or Catholicism is considered as a national religion in some European countries to, and Islam is the national religion in the Arab world. Sri Buddhism is regarded as the national religion in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

3. **Ethnic Religion:** the Persian (Zoroastrianism), the Jew (Judaism), the Indian (Hindu) and (Sikh), the Japanese (Shinto), and the Chinese (Confucianism) and (Taoism).

4. **New Religion:** “Unification Church: in South Korean, "Tenrikyo"
in Japan, “Bahá’í Faith” in Iran, and “New Confucianism” and “God’s Salvation Church” (God saves World UFO Club) in Taiwan.

5. Similar Religion: Three Principles of the Peoples. There is a leader in that group, and the followers pursue an enduring principles and the ceremony.

6. Folk Beliefs: it is also called “folk religion”, a universality religion or an ethnic religion. This is the most influential religion for ordinary people’s daily life and rituals. It can be said that this religion is the religion of culture.

Religions in Taiwan

Taiwan has a long history of immigration and colonization, even the so-called ‘aboriginal people’ in Taiwan drifted here several thousands years ago. When Taiwan has begun to appear on the map of world, the practice of worshipping nature has occurred in this island and mostly practiced by the native Taiwanese tribes. About four hundreds years ago, many Han Chinese from China migrated to Taiwan and changed the
aboriginal culture. In the 17th century, the Spanish and Dutch occupied Taiwan not for a long time, but the exposure of the western culture seems to influence Taiwanese cultural and religious structures. Due to the diversities of cultures in Taiwan, several religions have also emerged gradually and the influences of foreign practices have also prevailed in the Taiwanese society.

Most of the religions are practiced in mainland China have been carried forward to Taiwan. China is the place of origin of the Taoism and Confucianism, as well as a folk religion. In other words, Taiwanese traditional religions are comprised of Buddhism, Taoism, and folk beliefs. Taoism has originated from China in the fourth century B.C., while Buddhism has initiated in northern India in the sixth century B.C.. During the Japanese occupation period, Taoists were persecuted for their religious beliefs. As a result, they secretly began to worship their deities in Buddhists temples, although the worship of Taoism and Buddhism in Taiwan are in different ways. After World War II, Taiwan came under the
administration of KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party). Traditional Taiwanese religious beliefs have become a polytheistic blend of ancestor worship, Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religions. That is, the Taiwanese worshipped the Taoists, Buddhist, and folk deities together in the Buddhist temples. Christianity was imported into Taiwan in the early seventeenth century by Spanish and Dutch missionaries, and they even translate the Bible into indigenous languages. It happens to preserve the aboriginal culture.

The atmosphere of religions in Taiwan is unrestrained because there is no direct correlation between Taiwanese government and religion. This is the main reason that numerous religions are present in this island. It is very lucky for Taiwanese to have their free will to choose their religious beliefs, and no one has ordered them to choose one specific religion. There are so many reasons for someone who wants to choose his or her religious beliefs, and they might be fond of the doctrines of religions or the conception of life and death. We could say that religion is inevitable in Taiwanese daily lives because the evidence of religions in Taiwan is
everywhere. Not only the thousands of temples exist all over Taiwan, but also cars are decorated with religious icons. Moreover, many families have altars at home, and they worship daily and make offerings on certain days every month.

Taiwan is a country with a variety of religious beliefs, and there are currently thirteen registered religions with Taiwanese government. These religions consist of Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and several smaller cults such as Hsuan-yuan Chiao (Heaven Emperor Religion), Islam, Li-ism (理教), Tenrikyo (天理教), Baha’I (巴哈伊教), T’ienti Teachings (天帝教), Tien Te Chiao (天德聖教), I-Kuan Tao (一貫道), and Mahikarikyo (真光教團). However, those registered religions cannot be represented the true face of Taiwanese religious beliefs because many temples and aboriginal traditional religions are not registered with the government.

Among twenty three million populations in Taiwan, Buddhists are about eight million and Taoists are about seven and half million people.
The report indicates that there is a considerable overlap in the number of believers in Buddhism and Taoism. In addition, Protestants are about six million, and Catholics are about three million. In fact, nearly eighty percent of Taiwanese practice religious beliefs, and more than half of the Taiwanese participate in religious ceremonies and celebrations of all types on a regular basis. In a word, Taiwan is really a melting pot of diverse religions. It is difficult to point out the single religion from a varied directory of Taiwanese religions to stand for the Taiwanese belief systems. Since Taiwan is an immigrant society, Chinese immigrants have been inherent in the traditional beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism that have been deeply rooted in Chinese culture. Although some common Western world religions such as Christianity and Catholicism are less popular in Taiwan, they still have some worshipers. Other minor religions have also been practiced throughout the country in different areas. Therefore, different religions beliefs in Taiwan exist together in a peaceful way even though there are religious differences. Taiwanese are truly
accepted by each and every individual with different beliefs and practices.

In general, most of Taiwanese do not concentrate on one God, but on a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Religious practices in Taiwan include a mixture of Buddhist and Taoist deities, and a variety of historical figures are also worshiped in the temple. That is to say, the primary religious beliefs and practices in Taiwan are Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and Christianity and Catholicism are also common Taiwanese Religions. Religions in Taiwan are such a complex being, evolved through history and peculiar cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the first phrase in this book analyzes the core value of Taiwanese religions such as primal religious practices, Confucianism, Taoism, and folk religions, as well as “foreign” religious in China, including Buddhism and Christianity, by inquiring into how they spread into Taiwan and permeated with each other in history. The second phrase reviews how religions affect Taiwanese custom and society such as ritual and ceremonies. With students’ participation throughout the course, the author hopes l be a real cross-cultural dialogue, and hopefully mutual inspiring.
Questions:

1. Based on what you have read about the religions in Taiwan and China, why did they not have religious wars?

2. Summarize what we have found out about Taiwanese religions.

(discuss with your group members and write it down)
In Chinese society, most of the Chinese place great emphasis on the family values, and they particularly pay attention to the authority of the father in the household. Strictly speaking, Chinese society is a patriarchal structured society. All families used to live in one house with central courtyards, and the family would carry out religious ceremonies such as worship ancestors in the ancestral temple. The family would follow the general religious customs of the local area. In other words, the importance of ancestor worshiping still prevails in Chinese culture. These life-styles came about the ideas of Confucius, his ideas and teachings are the basis of Chinese society.
Confucius and His Teachings

Confucius, whose dates were from 551 to 479 B.C., was a great philosopher, educator, and thinker in China, and he was also an important representative of the Confucianism. Confucius spent most of his time engaging in the educational work and developing his ideas on the ruling of government, and Confucius dedicated to the “benevolence” and “ceremony” concepts. His profound philosophies made him gather a large number of students and followers, and the course work that he taught included ritual, music, history, and poetry. Shortly after Confucius died, his followers compiled the works known as “The Analects of Confucius (論語)” and “Book of Rites (禮記),” the books consisted of conversations between Confucius, his students, and an occasional ruler.

The followings are some examples in The Analects of Confucius, and you could grasp Confucius’ ideas about moral excellence, education, and politic:
(This conversation between Confucius and Yen Yüan (顔淵) is about how to attain to perfect virtue)

Book XII: Yen Yûan

1. Yen Yüan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, “To subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?”

2. Yen Yüan said, “I beg to ask the steps of that process.” The Master replied, “Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety.” Yen Yüan then said, “Though I am deficient in intelligence and vigor, I will make it my business to practice this lesson.”
顏淵第十二

顏淵問仁。

子曰：“克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。仁由己，而由人乎哉？”

顏淵曰：“請問其目？”

子曰：“非禮勿視，非禮勿聽，非禮勿言，非禮勿動。”

顏淵曰：“回雖不敏，請事斯語矣！”

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(This conversation is talking about knowledge, acquired by learning, is necessary to the completion of virtue, by preserving the mind from being beclouded.

Book XVII: Yang Ho

1. The Master said, “Yû, have you heard the six words to which are attached six becloudings?” Yû replied, “I have not.”

2. “Sit down, and I will tell them to you.”
3. “There is the love of being benevolent without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to a foolish simplicity.

There is the love of knowing without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to dissipation of mind.

There is the love of being sincere without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to an injurious disregard of consequences.

There is the love of straightforwardness without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to rudeness.

There is the love of boldness without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to insubordination.

There is the love of firmness without the love of learning; the beclouding here leads to extravagant conduct.”
陽貨第十七

子曰：“由也，女聞六言六蔽矣乎？”

對曰：“未也。”

“居！吾語女。好仁不好學，其蔽也愚。好知不好學，其蔽也蕩。好信不好學，其蔽也賊。好直不好學，其蔽也絞。好勇不好學，其蔽也亂。好剛不好學，其蔽也狂。”

(Book II: Wei Chang)

Chi K'ang (季康子) asked how to cause the people to reverence their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to nerve themselves to virtue.

The Master said, “Let him preside over them with gravity; then they will reverence him. Let him be final and kind to all; then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent; then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous.”
Confucianism has also put great stress on the family as the center of morality and loyalty, and virtues are an extension of this belief. One of the most important things is that someone needs to know his or her role in this society, and he or she should make a contribution for their families or societies. In Confucian’s points of view, people basically have good nature. If someone provides the proper teachings of what they should do, they will be expected to do the right things in nature. Confucius also taught that the real happiness is that to achieve social transformation takes place when people follow a strict moral rules that are based on social values.

Teachers’ day in Taiwan is Confucius’s birthday, September 28th, and this date was chosen to commemorate Confucius’ contributions in Chinese
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Taiwan uses this date to honor teachers’ virtues, struggle, and contributions, and students usually drop by their teachers or send them a card to express their gratitude. In addition, there is a festival celebration in every Confucius temple on Confucius’s birthday, known as the “Grand Ceremony Dedicated to Confucius” (祭孔大典). The ceremony starts at six in the morning, and 54 musicians are dressed in red robes with blue belts, and 36 or 64 dancers dressed in yellow robes with green belts. The musicians and dancers are led by the chief descendant of Confucius, and three animals (三牲), the cow, the goat, and the pig, are sacrificed to worship Confucius. At the end of ceremony, the government officers award some teachers for their excellent teaching performance and positive influence in the local educational institution. And, the biggest ceremony is held in Taipei Confucian Temple, and the oldest Confucian Temple is in Tainan.
Confucianism

Although most people consider Confucianism as philosophy rather than religion, it is a common component of Taiwanese religion. Confucianism embraces some elements of traditional Chinese religions, such as the worship toward heaven and the ancestors, but the main focus is on the cultivation of virtue and maintenance of ethics in order to establish a harmonious society. In a word, Confucianism does not assert or deny the existence of a deity. Confucianism as an ideology is humanistic and non-theistic, and does not involve a belief in the supernatural or in a personal
god. Most of Chinese have considered Confucian temples as halls to honor Confucius instead of the places to worship Confucius. Confucian temples could be found in every big city in Taiwan, and they usually do not have statues for worship.

Confucianism was founded by Kong Zi (孔子), who is known as “Confucius” in the West. Confucius and his followers have sustained the significances of “rites and music (禮樂)” and “benevolence and righteousness (仁義)”. They also have insisted on following the correct path through “loyalty and forbearance (忠恕)” and “the doctrine of the middle way (中庸)”. As for the politics, they have advocated the “rule of virtue (德治)” and “benevolent governance (仁政)” to rule the country. In addition, they have emphasized the moral principles such as the “three cardinal guides of social order (三綱)” and the “five constant virtues (五常)”.

That is to say, the central part of Confucianism is humanism, the followers of Confucianism believe that human beings are able to be taught,
improved, and perfected themselves especially including self-cultivation and self-creation. Even though Confucius and his followers have never established a formal religious lineage, all of which are philosophical concepts based on Confucian teachings that are similar to religious beliefs. And, Confucianism has become the most remarkable a practical philosophy centered upon a few basic principles than a religion, but was often just as all-encompassing as any religion. In addition, Confucianism is also considered one of the “Three Creeds (三教)” alongside Buddhism and Taoism.

The Influences of Confucius in Chinese Society

Confucianism plays a remarkable role in many aspects of life in both Taiwan and mainland China, and Confucianism also has had an extraordinarily long impact on Chinese culture. When the teachings of Confucius were spread in China, the people accepted his teachings for their primary principles. Most of Chinese emperors were used his teachings and doctrine to rule their countries and to make Confucianism the official state
philosophy. Then the influences of Confucianism have affected everything in China such as education, government, public and private attitudes, and manners. Confucius might be the one to blame or than (depending on who you ask) for the rigorous testing culture that is found in Asia. Therefore, Confucianism is not a religion but a philosophy, and a guide to ethics and government’s ruling. Like Socialism, Confucianism advocates the collective interests and social welfare. Both of them emphasize the common interests in serving the community in the process of education and reformation. Nowadays, we can see that the concept of the collective interests and welfare is still very active in China.

There is one thing that the author would like to discuss, a unique Chinese culture, “lose face”. “Lose face” refers to the loss of honor and respect with others, and most of Chinese do not want to put themselves in that strange position. Most of the Chinese would do their best to avoid loosing their faces. To protect someone from losing his or her face is considered as good manners in Chinese society, and as a good person must
show respect for another and not embarrass or allow any demeaning of a person in front of others.

Tainan Confucius Temple

Confucius Temple in Tainan was built in 1665, the first Confucius Shrine in Taiwan. At this time, the Shrine was only constructed Da Zhong Chamber (大成殿). After Taiwan became a part of Qing Dynasty, it became the citadel at home (全臺首學) in Taiwan. Therefore, it was enlarged and rebuilt several times to make its current great scale. But, some constructions were destroyed in the Japanese occupation, and the rest of structures, generally, still maintain their original exteriors, thanks to 17 times restorations.

There are many stone tables inscribed by Qing Dynasty Emperors. On the eastern Da Cheng Courtyard (東大成坊) stands an inscription in both Chinese and Manchurian. It says, “Civil and military officials, soldiers and citizens, all get down from their horses here” (下馬碑). These articles are invaluable artifacts.
Questions:

1. Can Confucianism still survive in the 21st century?

2. Do you agree Confucius’s philosophy about education?

(Please discuss these questions with your group members)
The second popular religion in Taiwan is Taoism, and Taoism, the oldest Chinese religion, was created in China. The followers of Taoism whose followers worship the Three Purities (三清), the Yuanshi Tianzun (元始天尊), the Linbao tianzun (林寶天尊), and Daode tianzun (道德天尊). In Taoism, it has its own hierarchical system of deity. For example, at the early stage of Taoism’s development, the gods of higher rank would not be placed on the same table with gods of a lower rank because they all have their own positions.

Lao Tzu and His “Tao”

Lao Tzu was born in the sixth century B.C., a contemporary of Confucius. Lao Tzu’s work, “Book of Tao and its Virtue” or “The Way and Its Power” (道德經), has led him to be traditionally considered the founder of philosophical Taoism. His main philosophical system has emphasized on individual freedom, laissez-faire government, human
spontaneity, and mystical experiences. In addition, the main idea of Taoism is that the whole world is governed by one principle, “Tao” means “Way” (道). “Tao” is the Chinese character for a road or track, as well as that of awareness and reason. To be honest, “Tao” is very difficult to explain; put it in simply, “Tao” is the way people should live their lives in order to live in harmony with the world.

In other words, perhaps the most typical belief of this religion or philosophy's is “balance.” For example, the concept of Yin and Yang (陰陽) has originated from Taoism, and both sides (Yin and Yang) represents the characteristics of opposite and counterbalance. The most crucial idea in Daoism is to understand the nature of things and to perform in a modest way in order to avoid the endmost consequences. In a word, the ideal life style of Taoism is to pursue a simply way. However, Taoism is also very interested in extending people’s life and obtaining immortality. The central text of Taoist philosophy was considered as “Book of Dao and its Virtue” (道德經) which was first written by Lao Tzu, and then “Book of Dao
and its Virtue” was expounded Zhuang Zi (莊子) who helped to develop Taoism further. The author selects certain chapters in “Book of Tao and its Virtue” to demonstrate some main ideas about Taoism’s political and educational beliefs.

Book of Tao and its Virtue

Chapter 1

The Way that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way;

The names that can be named are not unvarying names.

It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang;

The named is but the mother that rears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind. Truly, “Only he that rids himself forever of desire can see the Secret Essences”;

He that has never rid himself of desire can see only the Outcomes.

These two things issued from the same mould, but nevertheless are different in name.
This ‘same mould’ we can but call the Mystery, Or rather the ‘Darker than any Mystery’,

The Doorway whence issued all Secret Essences.

第一章：
道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名。無名，天地之始；有名，萬物之母。故常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼。此者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門。

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Chapter 57

A state may be ruled by (measures of) correction; weapons of war may be used with crafty dexterity; (but) the kingdom is made one’s own (only) by freedom from action and purpose.

How do I know that it is so? By these facts:--In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people
have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are.

Therefore a sage has said, “I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.”

第五十七章:

以正治國，以奇用兵，以無事取天下。
吾何以知其然哉。以此：
天下多忌諱，而民彌貧；
人多利器，國家滋昏；
人多伎巧，奇物滋起；
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Taoism as a Religion

In fact, Taoism started it as a philosophy, not a religion, but eventually it developed into a religion. Therefore, there are two primary streams of Taoism: philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism, and these two are very different. The philosophical Taoism is more contemplative or theorization, while the religious Taoism believes in magic ways of helping people to live forever or superstition. Religious or superstitious Taoism is the most commonly practiced in Taiwan. Religious Taoism is a Chinese native religion, and religious Taoism is the combination of Buddhistic and Confucian theories. Religious Taoism has adopted some Buddhistic conceptions such as the relationship between cause and effect (causality).
As for the music of religious Taoism, it has imitated the Confucian ritual music. It turns that religious Taoism has mixed up with local folk customs and beliefs.

Taoism in Taiwan

Taoism has been brought into Taiwan more than 400 years ago by settlers in the Ming Dynasty, and some settlers were Taoist priests who spread Taoist beliefs in Taiwan. During the period of Japanese occupation (1895 -1945), the Japanese government has suppressed Taoism in Taiwan because some ideas of Taoism have related to Chinese patriotism. Many things related to Taoist were destroyed, and Japanese government even had various polices to against Taoist followers. In this case, many Taoist temples were forced to relocate or share their faith with Buddhist temples, resulting in the statues of Taoist and Buddhistic deities are worshiped in the same temple. This confusing situation has made most Taiwanese do not realize their real beliefs because they worship a mixture of Taoist and Buddhistic deities.
Matzu (媽祖)

The most important deity in Taoism is Matzu because she is the indigenous goddess of the ocean. Matzu is also known as “Heavenly Holy Mother” (天上聖母) and “Matzu Po” (媽祖婆). Matzu is widely worshipped by those who live in coastal areas in China, especially Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Taiwan. The reason is that all of these areas are classified as immigrant communities, and most of residents’ professions are fishermen and sailors.

Actually, Matzu was really a lady, Mo Niang Lin (林默娘), who was born on March 23, 960 (during the early Song Dynasty) in Fujian. “Mo Niang” in Chinese means a silent lady because she did not cry at all since she was born. After she died, the local people constructed a temple to worship her in order to appreciate her kindness in saving their lives. Chinese people has started to worship Matzu around the Ming Dynasty, when many temples dedicated to her have been erected all across Mainland China, later spreading to other countries with Southern Chinese
inhabitants. And, Taiwan has the maximum number of the temples to worship Matzu; in other words, most of the Taiwanese are believing in Matzu.

Matzu in Chinese means “the role model for mothers” because Matzu is just like a mother of Taiwan. Matzu is divided into three goddesses called “First Matzu“ (大媽 Da Ma), “Second Matzu” (二媽 Zi Ma), and “Third Matzu” (三媽 San Ma) in Taiwan. However, sometimes Taiwanese divide Matzu into six, or even eight goddesses. The majority of Taiwanese still believe the three ma or six ma system. Temples to Mazu are called Tianhou Temple (Palaces of the Empress of Heaven). Actually, in historical and cultural aspects, Matzu has accompanied by Taiwanese to go through the colonial periods such as Dutch, Spain, and Japanese. What it experienced is just like a microcosm of Taiwanese history, and the existence of Matzu has its own significant values. In order to worship Matzu, there is a special ceremony in Taiwan
“Crazy for Matzu in third lunar month” (三月瘋媽祖) is the most representative Taoism activity for those who believe in Matzu, and it is the procession or parade (遶境) to celebrate Matzu’s birthday. Matzu processions take place when she is carried around to inspect their territory every year, and the purpose is to comfort the believers and expel the evil spirits. Deity processions are just like the routine tasks of divinities. They usually take place when the local deity returns from a pilgrimage (進香) to another area to the community. Pilgrimage refers to a community temple’s main deity leads a group of believers to an ancestral shrine or a historical temple to perform their beliefs.

Both “procession” and “pilgrimage” are the most common religious activities in Taiwanese folk religions, and these are spontaneous behaviors of the believers. Whatever you are young or old, rich or poor; everyone could attend the procession which is not only the connection between God and God but also the exchange friendship between people.
The reasons for those who attend procession are to show appreciation for divine mercy and pray to ward off or wash the sin.

The most famous Matzu procession is at Chen Lan Palace in Da Jia (大甲鎮瀾宮), and it usually lasts for eight days and seven nights. During the Mazu procession, her believers from everywhere has gathered together to celebrate Matzu’ birthday, and the journey has gone through Taichung, Changhua, Yunlin, Chiayi and other cities, towns and villages. To be honest, it is a tough journey because the believers have to walk with Matzu for more than three hundred kilometers and participate in a large number of grand scale.

However, before the Matzu procession ceremony, the representative of the temple has to use moon blocks to ask Matzu about the date and time of departure (usually in the third lunar month). One day before Matzu procession, the staff in the temple have to held the “starting dinner banquet” (起馬宴) to reward the heavenly military (天兵天將) who will protect Matzu’ s safety. In addition, after “starting dinner banquet”, 

all participants must start fasting until the Matzu’s birthday celebration ceremony finished.

“Heavenly Military” are made with shimp.s.

There are eight ceremonies need to be done in Matzu procession:

1. Ceremony for Praying Peace (祈安典禮):

   The ceremony time is usually selected at 3:00 PM, one day before the procession. During the process of reciting the sutras, the representatives of temple report Matzu about this year’s events and pray for peace and safety for all the members participating the procession.
2. Ceremony of Sitting on the Sedan Chair (上轎):

This ceremony is usually held at 5:00 PM, after the Ceremony for Praying Peace. The high rank government officers and the noble men respectfully invite Matzu to sit on the sedan chair with people’s cheerful voices and ask her to bestow blessing to believers of the villages along the way where she patrols. In other words, the believers hope Maztu to bless themselves in the coming year.

3. Ceremony of Lifting the Sedan Chair (起駕):

“Lifting the Sedan Chair” means that Matzu’ sedan chair is lifted by the sedan chair team at midnight, and the final destination is Feng Tien Palace in Hsin Kang (新港奉天宮). With the sound of bells, drums, and horns, the procession begins its journey. The directors and supervisors of temple lead the believers to kneel down to worship Matzu, and respectfully invite
Matzu to set off. The believers will stay with Matzu to patrol her territory, and the procession atmosphere reaches to the apex.

4. Ceremony of Staying (駐駕):

On the way to Feng Tien Palace, a lot of believers will crawl under the sedan chair (鑽轎腳), beg for holy water (乞敬水), pick lofty money (撿高錢), and rob the sedan chair (搶轎) to plead for Matzu’s blessings. Some business stores will play plenty of firecrackers to wish for flourishing business, while Matzu’s sedan chair passes by.

After three days traveling, Matzu’s sedan chair finally arrives at Hsin Kang in the afternoon. Around 7:00 PM, the believers respectfully move the statue of Matzu off the sedan chair, and place it on the deity table in Feng Tien Palace. After that, the believers prepare a variety of offerings such as chicken, pig, and cow. The directors and supervisors of Feng Tien Palace lead the
believers to recite the sutras, and thank Matzu for her blessing that all the members safely arrive at Hsin Kang.

5. Ceremony of Praying for Blessing (祈福):

This ceremony is usually held at 5:00AM next day after the sedan chair stays in the place. The believers recite the sutras and light the “bright lamp” (光明燈), and the believers also pray Matzu to bless all the sentimental beings.

6. Ceremony for Expressing Birthday Good Wishes (祝壽):

This ceremony is usually held at 8:00 AM. The believers sacrifice the offerings, and the directors and supervisors lead all the believers to stand in front of the main hall of Feng Tien Palace. All followers devoutly commemorate Matzu’s birthday and wish Matzu to have long life, while reciting the sutras. All believers have to do “three kneelings and nine kowtows” (三跪九叩); that is, the participants kneel down for three times and head touching the ground for nine times to show their highest respect to Matzu.
During this ceremony, the representative of Feng Tien Palace will use moon blocks to ask Matzu about the returning time. When the ceremony is about finished, all participants raise the flags to cheer. In the believers’ points of view, it is the most touching moment, the climax of the whole patrol activities.

7. Ceremony of Sedan Chair Return (回駕):

This is the last ceremony that is held in Feng Tien Palace.

Again, the believers recite the sutras to ask Matzu to sit on her sedan chair for returning to Chen Nan Palace. The staff of Feng Tien Palace will gather around in a circle to see Matuz take off.

8. Seating Ceremony (安座):

This is the last day for Matzu procession. All believers sincerely move the statue of Matzu off the sedan chair, and place it back its original position in Chen Lan Palace. After that, the believers prepare a variety of offerings to welcome Matzu’s returning. The directors and supervisors lead the believers to recite the sutras to show their appreciation to Matzu for protecting
all the participants all the way home. After the seating ceremony, the whole patrol activities can be regarded as ended.

Looking at the Matzu’s procession and pilgrimage can be found that Mazu is not only just the fishermen's patron but also the patron of the Taiwanese. Matzu has a close relationship with Taiwanese history and people's daily lives, and she also demonstrates the bright side of human nature. Some believers are very devoted in Matzu procession because some of them temporarily quit their job to follow the parade, and some of them temporarily forget their diseases or pain in their lives. Therefore, those who already attend the procession, and most of the believers make an agreement that they would attend parade again for next year.
Taoism Practices and Rituals

We have to understand the main philosophy in Taoism is about “life and death” (生死); as a result, their rituals, practices, and texts are highly complex. Taoism has taught people to “know death before life” and to “look beyond death” because Taoism has tried to tell people to look death in the eye and to see life as a circle of changes. “Life and death” are the sides of a coin, and “life” represents “Yang” (陽) and “death” stands for “Yin”(陰). The concept of Yin-Yang is planted in Chinese daily life, such as Yin refers to shadow and Yang refers to sunlight; Yin stands for women and Yang stands for men.

The earliest Taoist ritual ceremonies can be traced back to the
original period to worship the nature spirits, and the worship of God and the ancestors has developed from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. In order to understand the divinity or ancestors’ mind, Chinese people use “moon blocks” or “Jiaobei blocks” (筊杯) to solve the issues in their lives. “Moon blocks”, the wooden divination tools, are originated and widely used in Chinese traditional religions, and moon blocks are made with bamboo and carved into a crescent shape. Each block is round on one side (known as the “Yin” side) and flat on the other (known as the “Yang” side). Moon blocks have to be used in pairs and flip the blocks to the answers of “yes” or “no” questions, but sometimes divinities or ancestors would answer “not yet” or “unknown”.

The procedure to flip Moon Blocks:

1. Moon blocks have to be purified by revolving the moon blocks around the incense burner for three times.

2. The believers have to kneel down in front of the divinities or ancestors and say their name, date of birth, address, and questions
while cupping the moon blocks between their hands.

3. After the believers make the request to the divinities or ancestors, the believers have to drop the moon blocks to the floor and land in a specific position.

Here are four possible answers about moon blocks:

1. Divine Blocks (聖筊 or 想筊): One round side of block face down and the other flat side of block face down means a 'yes' answer.

2. Angry Blocks or Crying blocks (哭筊 or 怒筊): Both round sides of blocks face up means a 'no' answer. It is said that the divinities are angered by the question, and it is shown in the way the blocks directly fall flat on the floor. Or, the divinities do not understand the questions that you ask.

3. Laughing Blocks (笑筊): There are different interpretations when both flat sides of blocks face up. It could be a sign that the gods are laughing at the question, or that they are laughing because the believers already know the answer on his or her own. One
characteristic of this answer is when the blocks sway back and forth when dropped, a symbolic show of laughter.

4. Standing Blocks (立筊): One or both blocks fall but stand erect on the floor. To be honest, the chance of standing blocks is slim. If the standing blocks occur, Chinese people will be in high spirits. Standing blocks is a sign of miracle, and it will courage the followers’ faith. In other words, in the believers points of view, standing blocks means that any bad things will turn into a good situation because of divinities’ help. In addition, standing blocks indicate that the deities do not understand the followers’ question, or the answers are beyond “yes” and “no”.

Not only “Moon Blocks” but also “Soliciting Divination Slips” or “Fortune Sticks” (籤支) are widely used in temples and family shrines, and both of which are often used together when requesting an answer from the divinities. Soliciting Divination Slips, the divination tools for Taoism or folk religion, are made of slats of bamboo loaded in a bucket and placed
in front of the divination statues. Picking a divination slip to predict ones future has become a popular religious practice in Taiwan for hundreds years. Why do Taiwanese make use of the divination slip to work out their problems? Because the divination slips provide religious guidance for the believers. The main issues of the divination slips are closely related to everyone’s daily lives such as illness, litigation, pregnancy, marriage, property, social relations, and so on.

The procedure to draw Soliciting Divination Slips:

1. The believers have to use the Moon blocks which are purified by revolving the moon blocks around the incense burner for three times.

2. Secondly, the believers have to kneel down in front of the divinities and say their name, date of birth, address, and questions (only one question may be asked each time), and then drawing one slip from the slip bucket at random. Each slip is marked with a number and rank.
3. Place the selected slip on the offering table, and the believers drop their moon blocks on the floor to ask for three “divine blocks” in a row. If the believers cannot flip three divine blocks in a row, they have to draw another slip until they cast three divine blocks in a row. If the believers could cast three divine blocks consecutively, and it means that they get the divinities’ permission to answer their questions. That means the believers find the precise divination slip.

4. When the believers finish the above procedures, they have to take the selected slip and looks for the corresponding poetic phrase placed in the slip bucket. The poetic phrase is printed on a piece of divination paper, usually 12–15 cm long and 4 cm wide, the divination slip is a piece as the answer to the believer from the divinities.

To be honest, “Moon Blocks” and “Soliciting Divination Slips” are just the tools which are exercised to reveal the unknown answers through
the advice of deities (神諭). It is also an important method of “multiple confirmations.”

*Could you tell me which poetic phrase is better?*
Penghu Tien Hou Temple (澎湖天后官)

In 1683, Shi Lang, a Qing general, successfully defeated the forces of Zheng family in Penghu. Shi Lang sent a petition to the emperor, saying that victory had been made possible through the interference of Ma-tsu (媽祖), who had used her spiritual power on behalf of the Qing military. Emperor Kang Hsi (康熙) dictated that Ma-t was honored with the title of Tien - Hou (Heavenly Queen). Although Penghu Tien Hou Temple seems to be a small temple, it is the oldest temple in Taiwan with historical stature.
Questions:

1. Do you know which one is “Laughing Blocks”, “Angry Blocks”, or “Divine Blocks”? (Write it down on the blanks)
2. Try to explain this. Discuss it with your group members and write it down on the blanks.
Buddhism is the most practiced religion in Taiwan, and the believers are about 4.9 million. That is, the believers of Buddhism widely spread in Taiwan, worshipping and meditating in temples. There are many Buddhist temples and monasteries, as well as a very large population follow the Buddhism disciples. The Buddhists would say a state of neither changing nor unchanging, of neither becoming nor not becoming.

Who is Buddha?

Buddha was a real person known as Siddhartha Gautama (釋迦摩尼佛), who was born in 563 B.C., and he was a prince in the wealthy royal family in Nepal. When Prince Siddhartha Gautama was at age 29, he left his royal family to search for the true happiness. After six years practicing (528 B.C.), he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha, enlightened one, while he was mediating. Shortly after his Awakening, Buddha delivered his first
sermon, in which he laid out the essential framework upon which all his later teachings were based. Buddha spent the rest of his life teaching the truth what he found out during his mediation, and it is also known as Dharma (佛法).

Buddhism

Buddhism was originated in India, and Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. After the death of Buddha, his followers divided Buddhism into two primary schools of thought: Theravada or Hinayana (小乘佛教), which has been popular in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and Mahayana (大乘佛教), which has been widespread in Northeast Asia and Taiwan. Theravada Buddhism is concerned more with individual salvation through contemplation and self-purification, while Mahayana teaches compassion and universal salvation. In other words, Mahayana Buddhism has emphasized a “complete and immediate (圆顿)” realization of enlightenment, directly observing the fundamentally silent and extinguished nature of all things, and equating the mundane with the
sacred to achieve enlightenment. Even though most of Taiwanese believe in Mahayana Buddhism, what they practice is not the “pure” Buddhism. The characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism in Taiwan has been mixed with Taoism, Confucianism, and Chinese folk religions.

The Philosophy of Buddhism

The first Buddha’s teaching is the Eight-Fold Path (八正道), Right view (正見), Right intention (正思惟), Right speech (正語), Right action (正業), Right livelihood (正命), Right effort (正精進), Right mindfulness (正念), and Right concentration (正定). The Eight-Fold Path is often represented by means emphasize a particular order of spiritual cultivation, the path to self-awakening and liberation. In other words, the Eight-Fold Path is the eight ways for Buddhists to cultivate and practice themselves to get rid of the cycle of death and rebirth.

Another important idea in Buddhism is “cause-and-effect” (因果關係), also know as Causality. In the Buddhists’ points of view, existence arises from cause-and-effect, non-existence is the extinguishing of cause-
and-effect, and the original state of being is empty. For example, if the students do not study hard (cause), then they will get the bad scores (effect).

One of the main philosophies of Buddhism is that life is a continual cycle of suffering. The primary purpose of practicing Buddhism is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth (生死輪迴) and to relieve from the struggles of life. In other words, the main belief of Buddhism is that people come back to Earth in new bodies after they die. If they performed the good deeds in last life, their next life will have a better one. That is to say, the devoted Buddhists would try to follow the Buddha’s teaching such as Eight-Fold Path. Once they succeed, they will stay in the “Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha” (極樂世界), the land with ultimate bliss and happiness, and not return to Earth again. Therefore, in Buddhism, everyone could be a Buddha one day if they practice very hard and attain the enlightenment. Enlightenment concerning the nature of the universe and self is a key component in achieving the state of unchanging and unbecoming.
To summary up, Buddhism applies the “original emptiness of the four elements (四大本空)” and “lack of intrinsic selfhood (五蘊無我)” to view the perception of the real life. Buddhism also employs the Twelve Causal Relationships and the Four Existents (四有) to analyze the process of the cycle of rebirth, life and death. The Three Realms (三界), Six Conditions (六道), and the Great Chiliocosm (三千大千世界) explain the changing locations of life and death. Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths (四聖諦), and the Eight-Fold Path (八正道) to reveal the path to eliminate worries and go beyond life and death. The six means of sense perception, “eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind,” is basic training for realization.

The Buddha has advocated the view of life that takes into account the three realms, past, present, and future. Death is neither a cut off point nor final answer. For normal people, death is only a part of the process of life and death, a turning point which connects past and future lives. In other words, the mythical world in Buddhist literature consists of the space of
three-times-life and Great Chiliocosm.

The author would like to introduce Hear Sutra (心經), Heart of the Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom, and it is the well-known and most popular of all Buddhist scriptures. The “Perfection of Wisdom” is one of the series in Buddhist literature, and the most prominent representative of the genre is Heart Sutra, along with the Diamond Sūtra (金剛經). The Chinese version of Heart Sutra only comprises 260 Chinese characters, while in English version it is composed of sixteen sentences. In other words, Heart Sutra is the shortest sutra of the “Perfection of Wisdom” texts, and Heart Sutra is the gist of Diamond Sutra. The Chinese version of Hear Sutra is frequently chanted during ceremonies whatever in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam respectively.
Heart Sutra

Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara,

While deeply immersed in prajna paramita,

Clearly perceived the empty nature of the five skandhas,

And transcended all suffering.

Shariputra! Form is not different from emptiness,

Emptiness is not different from form.

Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.

So it is with feeling, conception, volition, and consciousness.

Shariputra! All dharmas are empty in character;

Neither arising nor ceasing,

Neither impure nor pure,

Neither increasing nor decreasing.

Therefore, in emptiness, there is no form;

There is no feeling, conception, volition, or consciousness;

No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind;
No form, sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharmas;

No realm of vision, and so forth,

Up to no realm of mind-consciousness; No ignorance or ending of ignorance, and so forth,

Up to no aging and death or ending of aging and death.

There is no suffering, no cause, no extinction, no path.

There is no wisdom and no attainment.

There is nothing to be attained.

By way of prajna paramita,

The bodhisattva’s mind is free from hindrances.

With no hindrances, there is no fear;

Freed from all distortion and delusion,

Ultimate nirvana is reached.

By way of prajna paramita,

Buddhas of the past, present, and future

Attain anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.
Therefore, prajna paramita

Is the great powerful mantra,

The great enlightening mantra,

The supreme and peerless mantra.

It can remove all suffering.

This is the truth beyond all doubt.

And the prajna paramita mantra is spoken thus:

_Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha._
菩提薩埵，依般若波羅蜜多故，心無掛礙。無掛礙故，無有恐怖，
遠離顛倒夢想，究竟涅槃。三世諸佛，依般若波羅蜜多故，
得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。故知般若波羅蜜多是大神咒，是大明咒，
是無上咒，是無等等咒；能除一切苦，真實不虛。
故說般若波羅蜜多咒。即說咒曰：揭諦！揭諦！波羅揭諦！
波羅僧揭諦！菩提薩婆訶！”

Buddhism in Taiwan

Buddhism is a pan-Asian religion originated in India and was brought to China before the sixth century (around Han Dynasty). Since Buddhism has existed in China over thousands years, the formation of Chinese Buddhism has consisted of traditional Chinese characteristics Although Buddhism originated in India, it has undergone thorough Sinification since its introduction to China. Therefore, Buddhism’s philosophy, ritual, and ceremonies in China today is distinctly Chinese, and most of the Chinese even consider Buddhism as a local religion.
There are eight Buddhist sects in Chinese Buddhism, and they are the Tendai (天臺), the Shingon (真元), the Pure Land (淨土), the Soto (曹洞宗), the Rinzai (臨濟宗), the Shin (真), the Nichiren (日蓮), the Hokke (法華), and the Agon (阿含). Buddhist sects already established in Taiwan responded to the incursion by accommodating the newcomers.

Buddhism was introduced into Taiwan in the late 16th century, around the Ming Dynasty. At that time, Buddhist monks came to Taiwan with official permission because they built the Buddhist temples with the support of Cheng Gong Zheng and his followers. Not only Taiwanese believe in Buddhism but also Japanese. During the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), a lot of Buddhist monasteries were constructed in Taiwan because the Japanese government praised Buddhism highly instead of Taoism. Buddhism has flourished since that time. At present, Taiwan has one of the highest populations of Buddhist monks and nuns in Asia. In a word, Buddhism is the most popular religion in Taiwan without exaggeration.
Long Shan Temple at LuKang

Long Shan Temple at LuKang was created by Taiwanese Zen Buddhist Zuzhao Shifu (肇善禪師) in 1653 (Ming Dynasty), beginning with brick construction, as the first Buddhist temple in Taiwan. In 1777, Long Shan Temple was financially supported by QuanZhou (泉州) businessmen to reconstruct. Both the structural material and the architectural style carried from Quan Zhou as well.

Long Shan Temple at LuKang is a huge construction with 99 doors, a stage, worship halls, main and back chambers, and halls on either side. The front chamber having five doors is known as the Five-Door Chamber (五門殿). The surface in front of the chamber, made with rough QuanZhou granite (花崗岩), has now been rubbed smoothly and sparkly by the believers’ footsteps.
Questions:

1. What are the major differences between Buddhism and Taoism?

2. Do you know this Chinese character, and what does it mean?

禪
Zen
Unit 5
Christianity in Taiwan

Christianity

Christianity is not the homologous doctrine. Instead, it is the diversification of faiths that fall under a single belief. The extent to which followers of the faiths believe their religions to differ can be seen in instances of sectarian violence that erupt wherever the faiths flourish.

Christianity is the up and coming religion in many Asian countries, including Taiwan. Christianity has prevailed in every country, but it is the most accepted in western societies. Christianity has been flourished in Taiwan, while the particular colonial forces that have reached Taiwan’s shores. There are many kinds of Christians in Taiwan, and their beliefs maybe differ in some respects. However, they still have some common beliefs about Christianity.
Here are some main ideas that Christians believe:

1. God created everything that is visible and invisible.

2. Jesus is the Son of God and is One with God.

3. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

4. Jesus suffered and was crucified.

5. Jesus died and was buried.

6. Jesus rose again (the Resurrection).

7. Jesus ascended into Heaven.

8. Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

9. People who confess their sins will be forgiven.

10. Anyone could have salvation.

In a word, the main philosophy in Christianity is “Love” and “Light”. God is just like a light to guide human being, and God is selfless to love anyone. Here is the psalm to demonstrate the main idea of Christianity.
Jesus Teaches Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked.

“Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

7 You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot
tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?

11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.

12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.

14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”
16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.
The History of Christianity in Taiwan

The Dutch had introduced Christianity among the Taiwanese people in 1624 via the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (V.O.C.) (荷屬東印度公司). The first Christian missionary in Taiwan was Georgius Candidius, and he started his mission activates in Tainan. Robert Bunius continued Candidius's mission task in southern Taiwan, where he lived for 14 years. With these two devoted Christian missionaries, there were over six thousand aborigines who have been converted to Christianity by 1643.

In 1626, Father Martinez along with the Spanish troops to do mission work, while the Spanish army occupied the northern Taiwan including Keelung and Tamsui (淡水) for 16 years. Missionaries actively spread Roman Catholicism was introduced by Spanish missionaries during which they converted approximately four thousand aborigines to Roman Catholicism.
However, the Dutch forces occupying southern Taiwan pushed northward in 1642, and the Dutch defeated the Spaniards and drove them out of Taiwan. This left the Dutch as the colonial hegemony of both southern and northern Taiwan, but it also left the Presbyterian Church as the pioneering ideology on the island, free of the competition posed by the Spanish Roman Catholics. And, not many people knew those Roman Catholic converts’ situation since only little documentation was recorded about this period of Roman Catholic missionary activity.

However, life is full of surprise. The Presbyterian Church enjoyed free reign and support from authority on the island until 1682, when Chen Gong Zheng took control of Taiwan and expelled the Dutch. After Chen Gong Zheng governed Taiwan, we could say that the Christianity in Taiwan had more or less come to the end. The main reason is that Zheng family has supported Buddhism and Taoism more than foreign religions. Not to mention, when the Qing government took over Taiwan, many settlers’ religious beliefs were more emphasized on Confucianism,
Taiwanese Religions and Culture

Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religions.

The Treaty of Tian Jin (天津條約) that was signed in 1860 had afforded “Religious liberty to all Christians in China” and opened the door for missionaries. Prior to this, the endeavor by colonial forces to spread the Christian beliefs had been extinguished by the Qing dynasty. With the permission, British missionaries Reverend Carstairs Douglas and Reverend H.L. Mackenzie came to Tamsui and Mengchia (艋舺) to preach the gospel. In 1864, Dr. James L. Maxwell was officially sent to Taiwan by the English Presbyterian Mission, and he concentrated his mission work in southern Taiwan, particularly in Tainan. In 1872, the Canadian Presbyterian Church sent off George L. (馬偕醫生) to Taiwan, and he preached in northern Taiwan, especially in Tamsui.

Before Japan colonized Taiwan in 1895, there were 97 Protestant churches, 4854 Taiwanese believers, about 90 mission workers, and 13 foreign missionaries in Taiwan. However, during the Japanese colonial period, the Japanese government controlled over churches and forced them
to absorb Japanese Christian groups. The Japanese government also strictly
prohibited that the missionaries preached the gospel to the aborigines.

When the Japanese government finished the colonial ruling in 1945,
there were about 238 Protestant churches and sixty thousand believers in
Taiwan.

In addition, Roman Catholicism also experienced a relatively slow
development during the Japanese occupation. Some people think that this
was due to the suppression of the Japanese colonial government; however,
there is no concrete or direct evidence to support this hypothesis. By 1945
(when the Japanese government left Taiwan), there were only about ten
thousand believers of Roman Catholics, fifty two churches, and twenty
missionaries in Taiwan.

At present, there are over one million Christians in Taiwan, and the
majority is Protestant. Protestant churches in Taiwan are on behalf of more
than 50 denominations. In addition to the denominations established in
Western countries, Taiwan has its own network of independent Christian
churches. Those churches established after 1949 are the most commonly practiced, such as the Mandarin Church and the Bread of Life Christian Church (靈糧堂).

To be honest, the influences of Protestant, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholicism in Taiwan are not only on religion. In the 1860s, Christianity missionaries expanded Christianity primarily through education and medical treatment. That is, the Christian missionaries have made an elaborate contribution to Taiwan, one that goes beyond religion. With such ambition, the Christianity has lead to medical facilities and seats of education within the island. The followings are some extraordinary contribution by the Christianity:

Church

The architecture stands for the tradition in which they stand, and it also concerns related to the area in which they were built and the tensions that existed at the time of construction. A case in point is Wan Jin Church constructed in 1869, located in Pingtung County (屏東萬金天主堂). The
Roman Catholic doctrine was spread by two Spanish missionaries, Fr. Fernando Sainz and Angel Bofurul, and they tried to expand the size of the church in the district of Wan Jin. The most remarkable neighboring tribe is Hakka, and the Catholic Church found itself at odds with sections of the community. The design of Wan Jin Church has selected to look like a military fortress than a place of worship. The walls of Wan Jin Church are five feet thick and stand twenty five feet high affording protection from the aggressors. Believer or not, with the efforts of the devoted missionaries, the local people converted themselves to Spanish Roman Catholicism.

In 1874 (Qing Dynasty), the government officers, Bao Zhen Shen (沈葆楨), visited the Wan Jin Church, and he astonished that the priests and the local people get along with each other. Bao Zhen Shen requested Qing emperor to provide the official protection to the church. With the support of Bao Zhen Shen, in 1874, this request bore fruit. Two stone tablets can still be seen on the side of the church, one signifying the level of protection and a second that informed passing soldiers to dismount their horses (奉旨).
In 1984, Pope John Paul II bestowed the title of Church upon Wan Jin Church; the first church in Taiwan to receive such special accreditation. In addition, Wan Kim Church is one of the 49 churches in Asia and one of only 1583 worldwide. Wan Kim Church is the church reflecting Roman Catholic evangelical efforts in Taiwan.

Pingtung Wan Kim Church

is currently the oldest church in Taiwan. It has been opened for more 140 years since Spanish Catholic priest preached in Pingtung area. It looks like a military fortress as Spanish style façade, but insides of it has Chinese style creation.
Based on the Treaty of Tianjin and Treaty of Beijing which signed during the Qing Dynasty, Taiwan was asked to open the trading ports. As a result, Taiwan attracted many Western missionaries to preach in Taiwan “again”. One of the famous Christian missionaries is Thomas Barclay, and he established the Tainan Theological College and Seminary in 1876, the first seat of higher education in Taiwan. With Barclay’s contribution in Taiwan acknowledged with both the Barclay Memorial Church and Barclay Memorial Park.

Another important missionary, Dr. George Leslie Mackay (馬偕牧師) was born in Oxford, Canada in 1844. Even as a small child, he felt the call of Christ and wanted to become a missionary. In 1872, at his age 27, he officially became a missionary in Canada, and the Canadian Presbyterian Church commissioned him to go to Taiwan as a medical missionary. Dr. Mackay has first arrived in the Port of Takow (now Kaohsiung Port) in 1871. At that time, missionaries of Presbyterian Church of England had started to evangelize in Southern Taiwan. On the contrary, Northern
Taiwan with more population did not have any missionary and church. Therefore, Dr. Mackay decided to go to Taipei. In 1872, he arrived in Tamsui, becoming the first missionary in Northern Taiwan to spread the gospel. That is, Dr MacKay was considered as a pioneer priest of Presbyterian Church in the northern region of Taiwan, and it was the beginning of the Christianity in northern Taiwan.

Although practicing medicine and preaching Christianity in Taiwan was a difficult task at that time, Dr. Mackay has endured for over 30 years. Since he was a dentist, he has pulled over twenty thousand teeth and sermonized to different people around the island. During his thirty years preaching in Taiwan, Dr. MacKay has established more than sixty churches and baptized over forty thousand followers. He devoted his whole life and made great contributions to education, medicinal treatment, and missionary work in Taiwan.
Education

In 1880, Dr. Mackay returned to Canada and mentioned his eight years sermon in Taiwan. He had preached "under the shadow of large feces tree and the top of sky, and his students were sitting on the meadow." The residents from Oxford County were sorry for him because he had to teach students in poor condition, and they donated over six thousand Canadian dollars for him to build a school in Taiwan.

Financially backed by his hometown, Dr. Mackay used this fund to purchase land at the end of 1881. He engrossed in everything such as choosing a location, working on the blueprint, and importing bricks and lumber form China. This was the first modern school in Taiwan, and its design was a combination of Chinese and Western styles. The construction was completed and the school commencement was held in 1882. The school was named as "Oxford College" (理學堂大學院) to memorize the birthplace of the founder.

The plan was to create to be the training foundation for future
missionaries, so Oxford College can be considered the first theological college in Taiwan. To better facilitate the teaching of the gospel, the subjects taught in Oxford College included theology, Bible, social science (history, morality), natural science (such as astronomy, geography, geology, plant, animal, and mineral), theory of medicine, and clinic practices. Dr. Mackay had expanded the school scale, so Tamkang Junior High School was founded in 1914. It was the first Western education style school. It was also the cradle place of Tamkang High School and Aletheia University (真理大學).

Oxford College, Tamsui
Since Dr. Mackay was good at medicine, he had preached and provided voluntary medical treatment to the local residents. In 1880, Dr. Mackay founded the Mackay Clinic in Tamshui, which was the first western hospital in the northern part of Taiwan. Dr Mackay not just healed malaria, a significant disease at that time, but he was also concerned for each patient’s needs in the body, emotion, and spirit. In other words, Dr. Mackay treated many patients while at the same time proclaiming the good news of Christ. Most of the local residents were impressed by Dr. Mackay held the Bible in one hand and dental forceps in the other.

However, on June 2, 1901, Dr. George Leslie Mackay died of throat cancer in Tamshui. At that time, the work at the Tamshui clinic came to a halt, but he won the respect of the local residents. Mackay Memorial Hospital, founded in 1912, was established in memory of Dr. George Leslie Mackay who followed in the footsteps of his Master by coming to Taiwan with the message of salvation for all men. And,
Mackay Memorial Hospital was established when the Mackay Clinic upgraded its Tamsui premises.

To sum up, in addition to the churches in Taiwan, Christian missionaries also built lots of schools and hospitals in Taiwan in order to evangelize the Christian educate or save patients. For example, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has made a further contribution in 1885 because they produced the first edition of “Church News”, the first printing press in Taiwan. The contributions of Christian missionaries could not use language to express, and the influences are also beyond measure.
Role Play

Jesus Teaches Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) was mentioned in this unit, do you understand the true meanings inside it? Choose one of your group members plays a part of Jesus, another person plays a part of Nicodemus, and the rest of members could add any characters in this story.
Based on the research, it estimated that 35 percent of the Taiwanese consider themselves as Buddhists and 33 percent of Taoists. While the majority of religious believers are either Buddhist or Taoist, many of them also view themselves both Buddhist and Taoist. There are over eighty percent of Taiwanese fall into “diffusive belief system”, a combination of Yin-Yang of the universe, ancestor - worship, pantheism, animism, blessing, and curse. These ideas and philosophy are from the mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism and expressed in the different aspects of life. Therefore, it can not be classified as any religion, and many temples not only committed to one religious belief.

In this case, the researchers in religion regard it as “folk belief system” or “folk religion”. Therefore, the belief system of most Taiwanese belongs to this category, at least in some form of traditional folk religion.
Such folk religions may overlap with an individual’s belief in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, or other traditional Chinese religions. For example, Buddha, Great Emperor Shennong (神農大帝), and Confucius are worshiped in the same temple.

Folk religions are comprised of custom and tradition formed by the majority of Taiwanese, and the customs of folk religion are closely associated with the traditional agricultural society. The divinities in folk religions usually can be divided into four categories, namely, divinities, ancestors, heroes in history, and spirits.

Divinities

Deities may be individually known, named, and personalized, recognizable by their attributes such as Jade Emperor (玉皇大帝), the highest-ranking governor in the Court of the Celestial Emperor and all realms of existence below.
Ancestors

In folk religions, the ancestors watch over their descendants even they pass away, so the ancestors sometimes treat their descendants in a harsh or gentle way. In addition, the ancestors could be consulted in special occasions or can be summoned for help.

Heroes in history

Heroes refer to some extraordinary people who were glorified and admired by a group of people in the old days. They were considered as semi-divine and the descendants of the deities.

Spirits

Spirit is a set of beliefs based on the existence of non-human "spiritual beings" or similar kinds of embodied principles. One of spiritual form is ghosts who are the differentiated soul of deceased people and have not reached or remained in the other world. Another spiritual form comes from natural environment including animals, plants, rocks, and geographic features. The most famous is the God of Earth (土地公) who is in charge
of administering the affairs in the believer’s community.

In addition, there two prominent characteristics in folk beliefs, Idolatry and the worship of ancestors which are explained in the followings.

Idolatry

One of the foremost features in the Chinese folk belief is idolatry. The worship of idols is performed at home, in public, at small shrines, in temples, and in some cases at work. People kneel down, burn the incense, and sacrifice offerings in front of their altars and the statues of divinity. Even though the divinities are often different from place to place, these divinities are besought for favors and to ward off evil.

The Worship of Ancestors

Ancestor worship is even more wide-spread in Taiwanese society. It is normal for descendants to burn incense, present elaborate meals, and serve with empty seats for each of the deceased in the family treating the deceased as if they are still living. Some devoted descendants generally
burn incenses to a picture of a dead ancestor everyday. The main reason is that the incense stands for prosperity in Chinese culture, so families believe that there is more prosperity in burning more incense. Many people burn paper money or replicas of things such as paper cars, paper houses, or paper one million dollar bills, and believe that their ancestors will be able to make use of them in the their world.

However, these worshiping are just simple respect for those who have passed away, and the descendants have no thought to receive any help or reward from the ancestors, nor seriously considering that the ancestors receive the gifts. In some people’s points of view, it is more a matter of tradition and respect than a serious religious belief. In contrast, some other people deeply believe these beliefs in folk religions, and they are sincerely devoted to it.

Some relatively individualistic practices, which also comprise of a part of religious life in Taiwan, and these practice are easily found in folk religions. For example, asking question to the deity through the shamans
(乩童), known as psychic in western culture, worshiping the Taisui (太歲), lighting the bright fortune lamp (光明燈), thanking the gods when moving into a new house (入厝). Moreover, it is essential to thank the gods and pray to the Heavenly Lord (拜天公) at home.

The Usage of Paper Money

Paper money is considered as the currency which could use in the afterlife, and the living believe that the lower realm is in some aspects very similar to the material world. People burn paper houses, cars, servants, and televisions to please the ghosts. The families also use paper money to bribe some wandering ghosts, so that these lost souls do not disturb or bring misfortune to their lives.
Assessment

Write a paragraph describing the changing religious belief and practice over the past twenty years in Taiwan.

• How often people are involved in religious practice

• Frequency of religious practice within different age groups

• What religious beliefs are important to people today.
We could define religion narrowly as formal ritual and ceremony and say that these “superficial” practices are the only expressions for more deeply values. Like Halloween in the West, Ghost Festival in Taiwan is all about ghosts and spirits, but there are more rituals and customs needed to practice in Taiwan for a whole month (the seventh month in the Chinese calendar). The rituals were developed by Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religions, the main purpose is to transmute and absolve the sufferings of the deceased. These religious rituals are considered as a form to help ghosts and ancestors ascend to heaven, and the dead will in turn bless the living with good fortune.

Jian Jiao

The “Jian Jiao (建醮),” the largest religious ceremony, is related to releasing the ghosts from the lower realm. It is usually not held every year, maybe only once every few years, decade, or even several decades apart.
In addition to pray for peace, and to thank and to reward the deities, in the last day of the Jian Jiao is to comfort ghosts. During the Jian Jiao, different kinds of sacrifices will be served to the ghosts because people hope that the ghosts could leave as soon as possible after they finish eating in order to leave the peace in their villages.

Jian Jiao begins with a series of rituals where monks chant the sutras on the first day of the seventh lunar month, the shrine doors at Temple are opened, inviting the ghosts from the underworld to enjoy the food offered by the living. Incense and candles in the ritual of Jian Jiao cannot be extinguished for twelve days. The ghosts will have a large feast is provided by the living on the fourteenth day, and they will place with different kinds of sacrifices on the offering tables to please the ghosts and ward off bad luck.
The release of water lanterns is the climax on the last day of the Jian Jiao, and the lanterns have a variety of shapes such as ships, houses, and temples. The release ceremony of water lanterns paraded around the city on glittering floats accompanied by folk performances. The water lanterns are believed to be the guiding lights for water ghosts, the lost ghosts, and spirits, showing them the way to the sacrifices on earth. These lanterns are usually set by the lotus-shaped lantern on a paper boat. The lanterns are used to guide the ghosts back to the underworld, and it represents that they have found a way home.
Miaohui

Miaohui means to “Temple Fair” (廟會), which is a Chinese cultural gathering fair in the nearby temples. Temple Fair is usually held on the deities’ birthday in order to worship deities. In addition to the Chinese opera, the traditional bands have always performed in the Temple Fair, now bands have been simplified to drum bands (大鼓陣) or wind bands (鼓吹陣). The major component in Temple Fair is the Songjiang Battle Array (宋江陣). Songjiang Battle Array has established in Taiwan to fight against the bandits 200 years ago. Today it has developed into a form of folk performance combining with martial arts, religious dancing, and folk music. Songjiang Battle Array is not just a religious performance, and it has become a remarkable cultural practice in Taiwan. It is well known that the religious activities have advanced closely in step with the development of folk art.
Martial arts

is also known as “kung fu” (武術). It also include lion dancing (獅陣), Songjiang Battle Array, or songjiang lion dancing, which combined the two. Lion dancing is more prominent in the northern part of Taiwan, while songjiang was more often found in the southern part of Taiwan. The lion dances and songjiang shows serve to intimidate evil spirits and ward off evil. These rituals are usually held to welcome the gods, to celebrate moving into a new house, and to commemorate the opening of the temple.

Eight Infernal Generals

The Eight Infernal Generals (八家將) are in charge of the leaders in the procession, and their responsible for calming onlookers and grabbing evil spirits. Before the performance of the Eight Infernal General troupe take place, the deities are sincerely invited to possess those who in the Eight Infernal General. The troupe members have to be the vegetarians and stay in abstinence during the preparation for performance. After make-up is applied on the day of the performance, the troupe members have to
maintain the solemn demeanor and the peaceful expression when resting, casually speaking in particular. It is believed that they are on behalf of the deities at that time. While performing, the troupe members hold a feather fan (羽扇) in one hand and a piece of ritual equipment in the other, and they wear on the crowns on the heads, dress in a robe, and wear grass shoes and red socks. They have to walk with the tiger step (虎步) or jump and always maintain the frightening images, and it is intended to strike fear into any evil spirit that they come across and to allow them to be captured.
Chinese Calendar

The Chinese calendar is a lunisolar calendar, incorporating elements of a lunar calendar with those of a solar calendar. The earliest evidence of the Chinese calendar is found on the oracle bones (甲骨) of the Shang Dynasty (商代) (late second millennium BCE), which seem to describe a lunisolar year of 12 months.

In Chinese culture, the Chinese calendar is called the “agricultural calendar” (農曆) while the Gregorian calendar is called the “common calendar” (公曆). In addition, the Chinese calendar is the “yin calendar” (陰曆) which related to the moon, while the Gregorian calendar is the “yang calendar” (陽曆) which associated to the sun. The Chinese calendar is also known as the “old calendar”, and the Gregorian calendar is known as the “new calendar”. In other words, the Gregorian calendar has adopted as...
the official calendar, and most of Chinese still utilize the Chinese calendar for selecting auspicious dates for important events. The Chinese calendar is exercised not only in China, but also in many Asian countries such as Vietnam, Japan, Korean, and so on. The Chinese calendar is still marked the traditional festivals in East Asian such as the Chinese New Year, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Moon Festival. In addition, the Chinese calendar is also used in astrology, such as choosing the most auspicious date for a wedding or the opening of a business. That is, most of the Chinese consult the Chinese calendar for their daily life in every aspect.

**Chinese New Year**

Chinese New Year, also known as Spring Festival, is the biggest festival of the Chinese year (around the end of January to early February in the Gregorian calendar). It is a time when families, no matter how far away they live, gather together to say hi and have a reunion dinner (just like Thanksgiving in the western culture).
The custom of the Spring Festival starts from banquet at the end of year (尾牙), on the 16th day of the twelfth month of the Chinese calendar. On the 24th day, “farewell to the deities” is the day for families to clean their houses for the coming New Year. On the Chinese New Year’s Eve, the new calligraphic couplets (春聯) are posted on the front doors, and the elderly people usually give with “lucky money” in the red envelope to children. The Chinese people are fascinated with the “Red” color because red means joy, lucky, festivity in Chinese culture.

The activities of the Spring Festival are usually celebrated until the 15th of the first month, which is the Lantern Festival (元宵節). Lantern Festival is often known as the “second New Year” and marks the end of the Chinese New Year season. Children usually carry the lanterns on the streets, and the lanterns are decorated in the temples.

Regarding luck and fortune, many taboos are observed during the Chinese New Year. For example, the floor can not be swept in case good fortune that is swept out the doors, and it is not allowed to throw out
of garbage, either. The main reason is that people already welcome the God of Wealth on the second day of Chinese New Year. Some people do not eat any meat on the Chinese New Year because they believe that being a vegetarian on that day will bring them a blissful and fortune year. If a dish is broken by accident, it must be wrapped properly in “red” paper and discarded only after the fifth day of new year while saying “歲歲平安” to transform the portentous into the propitious.

Dragon Boat Festival

Dragon Boat Festival is also known as the Double Fifth Festival.
(端午節), which is on the fifth day of the fifth month on the Chinese calendar and it is around June in the Gregorian calendar. Long time ago in China, the fifth month was considered a bad and evil month, and so was the fifth day. In addition, the fifth month in the Chinese calendar is in the hot summer which easily causes some serious disease, so this festival is to drive off disease and evil ghosts. Later, the legend of Qu Yuan (屈原) was added to the festival. He was a Chinese poet who drowned himself in 278 B.C. because the emperor did not listen to his advice. Some fishermen raced their boats and tried to save him, but they did not make it. It should be the origin of dragon boat racing. His loyalty touched many people, and consequently some people threw the rice dumplings wrapped by bamboo leafs (粽子) into the river to stop the fish eating his body.
Ghost Festival

The Ghost Festival is also known as the Hungry Ghost Festival (中元節), and it is on the 15th night of the seventh month in the Chinese calendar and around August in the Gregorian calendar. In Chinese culture, the seventh month is considered as the Ghost Month, and the deceased ancestors, ghosts, and spirits come out from the lower realm. In other words, the embedded meaning of the Ghost Month is about ancestor worship because the descendants extend their love to their ancestors even after their deaths.

Chinese believe that ghosts leave the lower realm for one month in order to ensure the ghosts are happy and do not disturb human, they burn ghost money or paper money (紙錢) to make sure their ancestors have enough money in their place. Moreover, in the Ghost Month, everything seems to be not appropriate, so not many people get married or open businesses in this month. Since when Chinese people began to celebrate the Ghost Month is mysterious, but one thing for sure is that the ritual
and ceremonies in the Ghost Month is mixed with Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk religion.

The house for ghosts

**Mid-Autumn Festival**

Mid-Autumn Festival is also known as Moon Festival or Moon cake Festival (中秋節), and it is on the 15th day of the eighth month in the Chinese calendar (around September or October in the Gregorian calendar). The Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the three important holidays in the Chinese calendar; the others are Spring Festival and Winter Solstice (冬至).
There is one famous legend about moon festival. A long time ago, there were ten suns in China causing the Earth’s burning, and Emperor Yao (堯帝) commanded Houyi (后羿) to use his arrow to shoot down nine suns. When his task is completed, the emperor rewarded Houyi with a pill that would make him an immortal. Houyi took the pill home and hid it; one day, Chang'e (嫦娥), Houyi’s wife, discovered the pill. Chang'e accidently swallowed it and found that she could fly. Houyi returned home and realized what happened, and he began to condemn his wife. Chang'e escaped by flying high into the sky, and Chang’e lived in the moon by herself. Now I think you know the reason why the majority of the Chinese felt disappointed when Armstrong took the step on the moon. Anyway, most Taiwanese will have outdoor barbecuing with their families and friends on Moon Festival because it has the most beautiful full moon night in the whole year.
Questions:

1. Do you know the Chinese zodiac (Twelve Animals section)?

2. Do you know which date is Chinese Valentine’s Day?

3. Why do Chinese people eat fish and radish during the Chinese New Year?

4. There are many legends about Moon festival? Do you know one of them?

5. Do you know Winter Solstice is also important for Chinese people?

   (Discuss these questions with your group members and prepare to talk about it!)
To be honest, nowadays some “incredible” customs and taboo have still existed in Taiwanese society; believe or not, it deeply influence most of the Taiwanese in every aspect such as wedding and give birth.

Marriage Customs

Most of Taiwanese still follow the marriage customs in order to make their marriage smoother. If the couple just engages, the matchmaker should not eat food prepared by both sides before the marriage is confirmed, otherwise the wedding may fall apart.

The wedding cakes sent by the groom’s side can not be eaten by the bride; if she does, she is consuming her own happiness. The bride’s side should present the wedding cake on the altar to inform her wedding to deities and ancestors. It is prohibited to take the incense in and out of the censer, or she will get married for twice.
When welcoming the bride, it is taboo for those born in the year of the tiger, being pregnant, or children, widow, people in mourning to watch or enter the bridal chamber. It is believed that those people will bring bad luck to the bride. In addition, in Chinese culture, people born in the year of tiger have violent nature of the tiger and may hurt people.

After the bride steps out of her house, her family should use a broom making a sweeping gesture or splash the water out of the door in case the bride gets marry again. Additionally, the clothes worn on the bride should not have pockets in order to avoid her taking away her family’s wealth. Before getting the car, the bride has to discard the fan in order to get rid of her bad habits.

While decorating the bridal chamber, the most important thing is the arrangement of the bed. The bed should not be under the beam, facing the table or cabinets, or directly facing the door. After the bed has been placed in the bridal chamber, the groom-to-be need to find a boy, who born in the year of dragon, to sleep with him in the bed until the night before the
wedding. The groom is not allowed to sleep alone because it might cause
the death of the wife.

There are still some taboos for the newlyweds within four months.
The bride’s mirror cannot be used for others, so the mirrors in the bridal
chamber are covered with red paper. The bride could not take a nap in bed,
and she could only doze off in the chairs in order to avoid being lazy. On
the other hand, the bride cannot sit at the edge of the bed in order to avoid
unsettled mind in the future.
Nurturing Customs

From the day of giving birth to the first month is known as “one month for rest (做月內),” the idea is for the maternal woman to build up her health by rest and nourishing food. But, some taboos are still need to be follow.

The newborn could only take a bath on the third day after the birth, and a small stone is placed in the bath tub, which symbolizes the newborn will have courage and not easily get frightened. It is necessary to worship the Goddess of the Bed (床母) because she will help the mothers to take care of their babies. Around 12, 24, or 30 days after the birth, the newborn could have the fetus hair shaved, known as “shaving the head.”

The most important celebration for babies is their first month birthday. On this day, the ancestors and deities should be worshiped, and the sticky oiled rice (油飯), cakes, or red-dyed eggs as the gift to relatives and friends. The family of mother will prepare all clothes and accessories needed for the newborn, known as “giving presents from
head to toe （送頭尾）.” The gold, silver jewelry, and longevity necklace （長命鎖） will given by the relatives and friends, and it is also known as “hanging talisman” （掛索）. On the baby’s first Birthday, after worship to the ancestors and deities, a ceremony is often held to predict the baby’s possible profession in the future, which is known as “zhuazhou （抓週）.”

Today maybe not all Taiwanese or Chinese people believe in the old ideas about good and bad fortune. However, they often like to follow the old traditions in the same way as Western people do.
Questions:

1. Do you know what it is, and what’s this for? (Write it down)

2. Share the customs and taboo in your country with the class.
In my opinion, Taiwan has been always open-minded to all kinds of religion, and it results in the different religious beliefs have coexisted peacefully these years. Primal religious practices, Confucianism and Taoism, as well as “foreign” religions in Taiwan, including Buddhism that originated in India, Christianity (both Catholicism and Protestantism), and folk religions such as the indigenous folk belief are permeated with each other in Taiwanese society.

Religions have emphasized on the conscience of human beings and help some people in need. The fundamental functions in religions are to provide the spiritual support to the believers, offer the place for the believers to meditate, and ensure the believers’ minds in the state of peacefulness and tranquility. Moreover, the religious ceremonies, like temple fair, pray, or ablution, are the memories shared with the local.
residents. Consequently, the religious places including temples and churches are more just the spiritual centers than the approach to enhance local identities.

Religions in Taiwan have greatly impacted every dimension. For example, Christianity missionaries treat Taiwanese people with all heart, and make the best efforts to improve the standard of living in the local community such as in education, hygiene, and medication. Mackay Memorial Hospital, Changhua Christian Hospital, Oxford College, Mackay Medical College are prominent examples given in this book.
Interview

Students assign questions to interviewers and put the questions in order. Topics to be covered in questions include: family life, symbols and worship, rules and ritual, scriptures, festivals, country of origin, life in Taiwan.

Based on your interview with a person from a Major World Religion write three pages, and it should contain three main themes:

• your expectations of the visit

• what you found to be the key beliefs and practices of the Major World Religion

• what you learned as a result of the visit.
Remark

- Confucius Temple, Penghu Tin Hau Temple, Long Shan Temple at LuKang, and Oxford College — 臺灣國定古蹟編纂研究小組
  
  http://www.facebook.com/idocare.taiwan

- Pingtung Wan Kim Church – 台灣厝仔
  
  http://www.old-taiwan.as2.net/006/611.htm

- Mackay Memorial Hospital –淡水古蹟導覽簡介
  
  http://163.13.140.253/maps/intro/hs15.htm

- Matzu’s Sedan Chair –
  
  http://cats1016.pixnet.net/album/photo/106032706

- Dragon Boat—陳韻強

- Confucius Ceremony –台北市孔廟儒學文化網

- Talismans, moon blocks, red envelopes, and Soliciting Divination
Slips – 林姝炎


- Spring festival couplets –
  [http://www.nipic.com/show/1/24/af16d8b26abf1358.html](http://www.nipic.com/show/1/24/af16d8b26abf1358.html)

- Feast, heavenly military, water lanterns, and the house for ghosts – 李欣怡

- Eight Infernal Generals — 九天民俗技藝團
  [http://www.facebook.com/ messages/1444011355#!/chiotian](http://www.facebook.com/ messages/1444011355#!/chiotian)
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